CHURCH HISTORY

Chapter 32 - The Congregationalists & the Baptists

1. *Robert Browne*
    a. *Of all the new denominations that arose since the Reformation, the Congregationalists, or Independents, departed the least from historic Protestantism. In doctrine and worship they were Calvinists. Their departure was in the matter of church government.*
    b. *In 1581, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, he organized a Congregational church in Norwich, and was cast into prison; the principles of church government expressed and explained by Browne are held by the Congregationalists to this day*
2. *Congregationalism Grows*
    a. *Congregationalism by the writings of Barrowe and Greenwood was a Puritan minister, Francis Johnson. In 1592 a Congregational Church was organized in London; Johnson was chosen to be its pastor and Greenwood its teacher. In the spring of the following year Barrowe and Greenwood were hanged for denying the supremacy of Queen Elizabeth in church affairs.*
3. *A New English Bible*
    a. *In 1603 James I succeeded Elizabeth upon the throne of England. At once the Puritans addressed to the new king a petition in which they set forth some very moderate requests. A conference between bishops and Puritans was held in the presence of the king. No changes in the affairs of the Church desired by the Puritans were granted. But one thing of very great importance was granted—a new translation of the Bible. The result was the King fames Bible, published in 1611. This Bible is the translation which has until recent times been in universal use among all English-speaking people*
4. *Smyth, Brewster, and Robinson*
    a. *John Smyth had been a clergyman in the Church of England. He adopted Separatist principles, and gathered a congregation in Gainsborough. Soon members were gained in neighboring rural districts, and a second congregation gathered in the home of William Brewster at Scrooby. Around the year 1604 the learned and lovable John Robinson became the pastor of the Scrooby congregation. Robinson, too, had been a clergyman in the Church of England, but he also had adopted Separatist principles*
5. *The Baptists*
    a. *John Smyth, who with his Congregational church of Gainsborough had sought refuge in Amsterdam, became acquainted with the Mennonites. Under their influence he adopted Baptist principles. A portion of his church returned to England, and in 1611 or 1612 established in London the first permanent Baptist church in England*
    b. *The Baptists who adopted Arminianism received the name of General Baptists; Particular Baptists - They were in many ways Calvinists, but they believed in adult baptism*
6. *Cromwell Favors Congregationalism*
    a. *Cromwell did not belong to any church, but he leaned heavily toward Congregationalism*
7. *The Westminster Confession Is Adopted*
    a. *Under Cromwell's patronage Congregationalism greatly increased in importance, but to this time the Congregationalists were not organized as a denomination. An assembly of Congregational elders was now summoned to prepare a confession of faith. Twenty-six days after Cromwell's death the Assembly met in the Savoy Palace in London on September 29, 1658. This synod adopted a* Declaration of Faith and Order Owned and Practised in the Congregational Churches. *Almost all the leading members of this synod had been members of the Westminster Assembly. So they adopted the Calvinistic Westminster Confession almost bodily as their confession.*
8. *Persecution and the Struggle for Freedom*
    a. *The Congregationalists shared in this persecution together with Presbyterians, Baptists, and Quakers*
    b. *These bodies of Dissenters took a prominent part in overthrowing James II, and bringing William and Mary to the throne. Together they reaped the benefits of a large measure of religious liberty secured to them by the Toleration Act of 1689*
9. *Decline and Renewed Growth*
    a. *During the eighteenth century religious life in England suffered from serious errors which were destructive to church life. Congregational churches dwindled. Some died out altogether. The Baptists also during the eighteenth century underwent the weakening effects of serious errors in doctrine*
    b. *But then there took place the great Methodist revival; A new interest was awakened in home and foreign missions, in Sunday-school work, the circulation of the Scriptures and religious literature, and in various works of charity*
    c. *Presbyterians and Congregationalists sang rhymed versions of the Psalms in their church services. The Baptists were the first to introduce the singing of hymns.*